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Writing Stars in the Sky or Decentring the Glocal Discourse of the ‘War(S) on Terror’ through Narratives of Those Displaced

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ABSTRACT

Inscribing names into the firmament of symbolic orders is crucial argues Rancière who traces the symbolic distribution of bodies into those that ‘one sees’ and those that ‘one does not see’. The issue of accounted visibility-cum-audibility does not only lie within the specific conflict configuration but also within the geopolitical dynamics of the ‘border’ as well as ‘body-borders’ within individuals and communities concerned. One such case can be found at the borderlands of Pakistan with Afghanistan, of the trans-local post-9/11 ‘Wars on Terror’ as well as at the borderlands of Pakistan itself, subjected to invisibility and rumbling noises of conflict and displacement through hegemonic centring of discourses and exclusionary, violent practices of the ‘Wars on Terror’. This article is a collaborative work on experiences of conflict-induced displacement, political violence and narratives of everyday life negotiations thereof, based on field research and interviews (individual as well as group ones) conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and around the capital of Islamabad with those internally displaced from North Waziristan, South Waziristan and Kurram Agencies. The aim is to juxtapose vociferous and deliberate hegemonic practices of invisibility and de-solidarisation in public discourses and counter-insurgency interventions vis-a-vis certain marginalised communities and citizens with the latter’s own narratives about their experiences and understandings of state-society relations, relevant stakeholders, public discourses and labelling practices used (such as ‘polio threat’ and ‘terrorist’). We attempt to trace and map how people experience and negotiate political violence, (protracted) conflict-induced displacement and the paucity of governance service provisions in a wider context of contested nation-building and transnational high-intensity conflict. Given repeated, cyclic and/or protracted experiences of displacement, flight and migration, combined with emerging narratives of marginalisation, exploitation and socio-political exclusion, one needs to ask what are the consequences of such transnational conflict and displacement configurations for individual as well as collective social resilience, withstanding ideological manipulation and cooptation into the conflict theatre, as well as for the capacity to develop and implement (alternative and sustainable) livelihoods in the different spaces one has to move in as an individual as well as a family-cum-community member in times of protracted conflict and displacement.

*'When I looked behind, it seemed to me as [if] all the stars are falling from the sky.'*¹

Inscribing names into the firmament of symbolic orders is crucial, argues Rancière, in particular when those names are part of a collective destiny, such as a simple citizen vis-à-vis those engaging in promises (such as fighting terrorism) or in contracts (such as peace deals, multilateral military cooperation or border regimes) – because 'whoever is nameless cannot speak' (Rancière 2006, 24ff). Rancière traces the symbolic distribution of bodies into those that 'one sees' and those that 'one does not see'; into those who have 'visible', recognised accounts vis-à-vis those who may actually speak, but whose articulations are not accounted for, but are regarded as 'noise' rather than as 'voice' (Rancière 2006, 24ff). The issue of visibility-cum-audibility lies not only within the specific conflict configuration but also within the geopolitical dynamics of the 'border' as well as 'body-borders' within individuals and communities concerned (i.e. borders inscribed through discourses and practices between citizens). One such case can be found at the borderlands of Pakistan with Afghanistan, of the trans-local post-9/11 'Wars on Terror', subjected via its people to invisibility, rumbling noises of conflict and displacement through the hegemonic centring of discourses and exclusionary, violent practices of respective military actions.

Reflections on Research Objectives and Concerns of the Case Study

This article is a collaborative exploration of experiences of conflict-induced displacement and political violence and the narratives of the everyday life negotiations thereof. It is based on field research and over 50 interviews (individual as well as group ones) conducted by the authors during late 2015 to mid-2016 in Peshawar and Lakki Marwat (a district of the province Khyber Pakhtunkhwa [KPk]) and around the capital of Islamabad with internally displaced persons (IDPs) from North Waziristan, South Waziristan² and Kurram Agencies.³ Interview partners hail from various walks of life in terms of literacy/education, profession/employment, site of displacement, religion, gender and age. The data were collected using an interview guide in English and Pashto language with a list of issues for questions on the experiences of displacement, but allowing for flexibility in the semi-structured interview process given the often traumatic nature of the narrative, the lack of experience of being interviewed, as well as the high level of suspicion among the internally displaced towards interviewers. Interviewees were approached in common places of assembly of IDPs or via friends and relatives at their home, using cues from local contact persons familiar to the research team members as well as snowball sampling to identify further interview partners. We decided to approach those living outside of camps, who represent the overall majority of the internally displaced, thereby avoiding problems with security agencies known for

restricting access to camp communities. One problematic side effect was the difficulty of reaching female IDPs, who are mostly restricted to their homes and are far less present in the public gatherings and public spaces used to identify potential interview partners. We rely therefore for that part to a large extent on data provided by our research team member mentioned later, who is a local from Kurram Agency and who collected this data as part of her thesis work. A number of interviews took place in a group setting as people were suspicious, unfamiliar or wary of individual interviews 'behind closed doors', more familiar and comfortable with the notion of a 'hujra' – a room in a house used for social entertainment, assembly and discussion in Pashtun society (or rather its male members one must emphasise). For reasons of protecting our interview partners' identity and safety and addressing their concerns and suspicions about being interviewed, only limited demographic background information was collected (e.g. age, family status, professions and income level, timing and trajectory of displacement), while names and exact dates are entirely omitted in our work. Interviews were thus conducted off the record, often only taking notes or making memory protocols; in quite a number of cases audio we were allowed to record the interviews, whenever interview partners were comfortable with it. These omissions are not without problems, reminding us of Rancière's concern that 'whoever is nameless cannot speak' and of the importance of writing names into the sky of the symbolic order of the post-9/11 'Wars on Terror' (see Rancière 2006). For whatever it is worth and in whatever limited way, we attempt to upload at least voices to the sky and hope that one day names can follow.

In this article, we attempt to trace and map how people experience and negotiate (protracted) conflict-induced displacement and the paucity of public and private relief and service provisions, within a wider context of contested nation-building and transnational high-intensity conflict. For the scope of this article, we focus on two major themes emerging from the interviews conducted as well as additional testimonies and material consulted: first, the issue of curfews, checkpoints and the quest for respect for those in the immediate course of displacement, when many encounter the State in a contentious situation, marred by demands for security and control, on the one hand, and offers of immediate emergency relief, shelter and respect as a human being and citizen on the other. Second, no displacement, as disruptive as it may be, takes place on a clean slate but within specific sociocultural, political and economic parameters and stratifications, with gender being one key denominator. Therefore, we trace and highlight the experiences of female IDPs of displacement, invisibility and mobility, predominantly burdened by further marginalisation and gender-specific vulnerabilities exacerbated by conflict-induced displacement. Both strands allow us to map, indirectly, state-society relations and the long-term impact of such counter-insurgency interventions as part of the glocal 'Wars on Terror' from

a decentred, grassroots perspective more often than not rendered marginal, invisible or unconsidered in prevailing public discourses. Out of repeated, cyclic and/or protracted experiences of displacement, flight and migration emerge narratives of marginalisation, exploitation and sociopolitical exclusion. One key question to be asked is, therefore, what are the consequences of such conflict-induced displacement configurations for individual as well as collective social resilience as well as for the capacity to develop and implement (alternative and sustainable) livelihoods in the different spaces which one must negotiate as an individual, family and community member in times of protracted conflict and displacement. In the interviews conducted, a series of understandings, practices and ideas of how to conceptualise and respond to challenges of belonging, resilience and livelihood is displayed.

Notes on the Conflict, Intervention and Displacement Parameters

Brown University's Cost of War project's multi-disciplinary team investigated 'the costs of the post-9/11 wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the related violence in Pakistan and Syria'.⁴ What is the record of the body count and what are the global ramifications? Its co-director argues that the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan 'have become one larger conflict' due to a series of interlinkages such as refugees and IDPs, drone strikes, cross-border military operations and transport paths for military support equipment along with covert or overt US funding for Afghanistan's and Pakistan's war-related spending in terms of equipment, training and operations (Crawford 2015, 1, 12–13).

The Pakistani military operation Zarb-e-Azb is evidence of these interlinked, translocal geopolitical border 'Wars on Terror', carried out where 'most (19 out of 24) of the US drone strikes in 2014' worldwide occurred (Crawford 2015, 12). As with other military operations, large-scale internal displacement emerged in its wake, further linked to US drone strikes that are 'disruptive to livelihoods' and 'contribut[ing] to problems of displacement, malnutrition and disease' (Crawford 2015, 12f). It is difficult to establish a clear record of the costs of war, given not only problems of who counts what (or not) but moreover problems of assessing indirect costs of war, that is, its negative effects on social and technical infrastructure, on displacement and human security. Tallying the record of 'costs' other than loss of human life or injury as direct outcomes, such as the psycho-social costs of the experience of war, directly or indirectly, of displacement or deprivation due to the conflict and its geopolitics is beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, the question remains as to whether there was ever a 'peacetime baseline' for the Federally Administrated Areas (FATA) to assess the current impact of the 'Wars on Terror' in the region, as there is none for Afghanistan (Crawford 2015, 20). Taking into account the Geneva Declaration Secretariat's suggestion to multiply by four the number of direct deaths to estimate the ratio of

indirect deaths, the scale of humanitarian emergencies in Pakistan and Afghanistan is immense and the silences surrounding them the more worrisome, given the approximately 173,000 direct deaths and the estimated 183,614 directly injured in both countries since 2001 (Crawford 2016, 9, 14, 2015, 20).

Zarb-e-Azb is part of a series of over 600 smaller and larger post-2004 military operations in FATA and KPk which have led to repeated conflict-induced, more often than not cyclic or protracted displacement and migration from FATA (Khan 2014).⁵ Indicative of state–society relations in transnational conflict configurations and policy-making settings, the experiences and subsequent narratives of those internally displaced (IDPs, or in military speak TDPs, temporarily displaced) about the very acts and phases of displacement, temporary resettlement and repatriation are rendered nearly invisible in Pakistan's hegemonic discourses. This is true for different media formats, in parliamentary and other policy debates at the national and international levels, which are, however, beyond the scope of this article. One reason is that such discourses and narratives are subject to securitisation and surveillance practices by different stakeholders at various levels of the polity and public. In one of Pakistan's leading monthly magazines, *Herald*, Alizeh Kohari (2014) problematises how those displaced are positioned at the fringes – be it in geographic or psychological terms. Specific labels are employed, which lead to the 'othering' of those internally displaced in the subsequent public imagination and thus to de-solidarisation with those at the 'fringes'. This centring objectification is an expression of a (post-)colonial legacy of fossilising such 'body-borders' of a community within the wider project of contested nation-building:

So little has been known about our 'lawless frontier' – the tribal areas – for so long; [...] the stories that we do hear now paint its residents as either objects of pity or emblems of fear. More than anything else, fear and pity both create a sense of distance – it becomes easy to think of the displaced merely as haulers of ration cradlers, of sick babies or carriers of a 'contagion' called terrorism, either victims or villains in a faraway land. (Kohari 2014, 37–38)

Those labelled are themselves threatened and victimised by militants in ostensible 'safety', in military-controlled camps and at registration points in Hangu, Peshawar or Bannu (in the province of KPk), militants who terrorise further an already uprooted and traumatised population. Nationalists or provincial stakeholders in parts of Sindh, Balochistan and KPk provinces have tried to bar IDPs' access to safety and relief services by staging sit-ins or stopping their vehicles. Their argument was based on a securitised need for 'containment' from terrorism and polio, thus imposing borders on those from the border-lands, this multitude of displaced 'body-borders' on the move (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2015, 343–345).

Overshadowing this scenario was a large-scale, months-long *dharna* (sit-in protest) by opposition politicians and their party supporters in Islamabad, protesting the outcome of the 2013 elections and contesting then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's electoral victory and government policies. The *dharna* appeared to relegate concerns with the humanitarian emergencies created by Zarb-e-Azb to the fringes of public affairs, as participants of the sit-in danced in floodlighting in a wave of trendy 'protestainment' at the heart of the country's so called 'red zone' (i.e. where major government institutions are located), without any signs of solidarity or concern with the large-scale displacement and emergencies occurring outside the public's spotlight at the same time. In a country prone to conspiracy theories, a sense emerged that the *dharna* politics – and not the politics of the counter-insurgency conflict – appropriated the attention and resources of the civilian governance epicentre.

The following quotes are typical examples of the constrained and complex state–society relations between Pakistani citizens from FATA and their State, their lack of appropriation of public spaces of solidarity and empathy. This is coupled with power asymmetries vis-à-vis the politico-military elite and within different parts of Pakistan, where the province of Punjab is considered a hegemonic centre in terms of political clout, access to resources and governmental development practices.

How can you tell these people, little children, that they cannot go to Punjab? Which law, constitution or rights dictate that you cannot go there? We are good people, we love Pakistan and we will continue [to love Pakistan]. God forbid anything should happen to Pakistan. We will be the first to stand up. These big people will be the first to leave.⁶

We think the operation is necessary. They should definitely do it. Because the presence of foreigners in Waziristan is the government's doing, not ours. (...) I did not bring Uzbeks, Tajiks. Today, if I say there are Tajiks and Uzbeks here, tomorrow, my head will be cut off and thrown there. (...) We do not have the strength to fight the state. We cannot throw rocks at them. Because those who came here, we came in peace. We thought our dignity would stay intact. The destruction of our dignity is beyond your imagination. Our dignity is completely destroyed. Do not give me money. Do not give me flour. But at least stop hitting me. (...) No one will save us. No one asks about us. There are people in Sindh and Punjab but there is no one in Waziristan.⁷

Their emergencies remain invisible, their voices silenced, while those at the centre of the geopolitical contestation, those diverse armed actors on either side of the hegemonic core of the 'Wars on Terror' noisily rumble 'in the wings', regardless of the intervention fatigue, if not exhaustion, of the wider international audience and local populations. Who will ever listen to Fazle Basir, an elderly poet, whose last wish is to publish a collection of his poems? How could he imagine doing so, finding the resources while being displaced

in Jalozai camp (35 km southeast of KP's capital Peshawar and approx. 166 km from Pakistan's capital Islamabad), living in a shared tent with other members of his family from Khyber Agency?

We were in a situation where fathers could not find their sons and sons could not find their fathers. It was night; it was dark; children were crying. Women left behind their clothes and household items. Our hearts ache – our wounds are so deep that even doctors would not be able to heal them. (...) The conditions back home and in this camp have shattered my poetry, and have shattered my thoughts and feelings so that I am not even aware of myself. I am sick and I am feeble. I cannot work and have no source of income.⁸

Displacement further produces distinct gender-specific experiences and subsequently reproduces marginalisations, be it in terms of coercion and violence faced or that most female-headed IDP households are not properly documented, as human rights defenders have criticized (N.N. 2010). Who at the hegemonic centres of the 'opportunistic indulgence in geopolitics of difference, conflict, and war', its public discourses, policy-making and military planning, as this special issue editors Raza and Shapiro argue its rationale, is concerned with looking beyond the exploited and politicised veils, or 'shuttlecock burqas' as they are often labelled demeaningly, of women from FATA? Who is concerned about their experiences of negotiating gendered dimensions of the conflict along with societal normative regimes such as gendered mobility restrictions, which intersect with the need to resist and to transgress borders to earn a livelihood, seek medical care or escape to safety? Illustrative is the case of the 60-year-old housewife displaced from Kurram Agency, whom we interviewed in Islamabad in late 2015, whose name we omit for security reasons. She has lived in protracted displacement in the country's capital since 2012, after having spent some time in Peshawar (the capital of KP province), which she considered too insecure to remain in.

The woman who had a shop at her home was brutally killed by the Taliban while travelling through Afghanistan to bring some clothes to sell. The Afghanistan route was not secure, because many people were killed while travelling. We are in such a difficult situation that even food was not available sometimes. Everything was very expensive. Those who wanted to bring some food items through Afghanistan were sometimes killed or kidnapped. Many families are still waiting for their dear ones. Women's lives were very disrupted; many were not allowed to go to the cities as male relatives said 'you are our *izzat* [honour]; it's better to die from illness at home than to be killed at the road[side]'.

Human rights lawyer Shahzad Akbar (2015) problematises in an exemplary way the everyday politics and societal discourses of human suffering produced by the geopolitical and trans-locally fought 'Wars on Terror', connected trans-border military strikes as well as local military operations like the post-2014 operation Zarb-e-Azb. He describes how those living in the designated 'borderlands' are considered peripheral and at the fringes of sociopolitical concerns,

how their own bodies and thus the 'border' that positions them become a way of life, an ontology of embodied experiences – body-borders – of invisibility, de-solidarisation, silences and emergencies, whether back at home or in displacement, in public discourse or counter-insurgency policies.

It appears that we have decided to count only our losses – and when I say 'ours', I mean those of us living in the cities like Islamabad, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi who belong to a certain economic class. When a civilian life is lost in the Tribal Areas – for instance, when civilians or even children get killed in Waziristan – that is not a national concern. No eyebrows are raised, no accountability is sought and any mention of such deaths is brushed aside. This division between 'us' and 'them', constructed through class, privilege, geography, and ideology has brought us to a point where it is not human life as such that matters but which human that matters. That kind of thinking has made it easy for some to choose to respond to terrorism with more violence. (Akbar 2015)

The Politics of Epistemologies (Alternative or Not) and Politically Charged Terminologies

We take our cue from Nayak and Selbin's (2010) critical approach to decentring international relations and conflicts, to mapping and deconstructing the underlying, overpowering hegemonies along with colonial-infused legacies of *othering* in addition to the neo-colonial contentions which emerge out of contested politics surrounding violent conflict. It appears that many depictions of geopolitical incidents like the 'Wars on Terror' are conceptualised, debated and narrated in a chronology of events and incidents centring on the Global Northwest, according to Nayak and Selbin (2010). On the one hand, this creates a subsequent legacy of perceptions of threats and fear through othering, with a unilateral flow of development and demands for mediation, and, on the other hand, a Global South chronology of dependency, experiences of (neo-)colonial dominance, exploitation and othering, thus requiring interventions with an uphill struggle for alternatives which more than often are devoid of a deconstruction of this hegemonic practice of centring in the first place (Nayak and Selbin 2010).

Mapping silences and emergencies is therefore vital in order to understand the working of conflict-oriented hegemonies, often imposed and sustained by stakeholders who have more to gain from conflict and enmity rather than from peace and more egalitarian sociopolitical projects. Such an approach not only allows an understanding of opinion patterns and narratives to be developed, but also enables the mapping of entry points for indispensable non-military, decentred interventions responding to humanitarian silences and emergencies and their impact on highly strained state–society relations in conflict configurations. Having said that, such an approach is a challenging one as it also problematises key concepts and terminologies

in discursive use – be it in mainstream media, political or academic discourses. Developing alternative terminologies and concepts would be beyond the scope of this article; however, it is crucial to take cure from Nayak and Selbin on what kind of data and insights discourses on conflicts and state-society relationships are based and shaped. As incomplete as our tentative exploration in this article is by centring on the displaced in a juxtaposition and thus challenge of hegemonic discourses through narratives collected from displaced persons, this hopefully will lead to first steps towards decentring discourses and thus questioning hegemonic frames and taken for granted terminologies in a very much required debate about alternative conceptual frameworks and empirical data informing academic work on international relations and glocal conflicts. This also includes the need for further empirical research to inform theoretical debates on the issues at hand – something most likely difficult to conduct in an environment of curtailed critical social sciences in conflict settings per se and in contemporary Pakistan's censorship practices of state authorities (and security agencies) in particular.

We would like to challenge the very notion of the 'periphery' of this border region and its people (displaced or not) in that regard, because FATA is at the core and at the crossroads of this geopolitical, transnational and trans-local contestation. It is deliberately kept at the socioeconomic and political fringes through specific and violent power-cum-surveillance practices and militarised interventions, part of this 'opportunistic indulgence in geopolitics of difference, conflict, and war' as Raza and Shapiro argue in this special issue. We therefore try to take cure from Nayak and Selbin (2010, 125), who critique the centring of peace and security, because it leads to (i) myopic, centred, marginalised and exclusionary narratives and discourses; (ii) a focus on institutionalised or militarised pathways to peace, which propose linear solutions and good-bad dichotomies instead of critically analysing the question of what counts as 'peaceful', 'secure', or, '[w]hose political sensibilities matter in determining when "peace and security" have been achieved?'. Decentring then engages with the contentious cartography of the *glocally* played-out politics of the 'Wars on Terror' in a way of challenging the very notion of centre, rather suggesting that there are 'no centres – but rather people and places and positions', with the story-telling of conflict and peace to be considered as a corpus of multi-level discourses (Nayak and Selbin 2010, 158–159). There are different forms of centring (or not) and reactions thereto such as distortions, dismissals, conspiracies (as theories of those experiencing powerlessness), hegemonies and dependencies. Even purposeful silences and emergencies are important, presuming that 'purposeful silence tells stories about what cannot yet find words', nevertheless challenging our political imaginary, understandings of phenomena, vision (or lack) of coping strategies and alternatives, to discover "the large lessons" in "small worlds"

(Nayak and Selbin 2010, 166; Brooks, DeCorse, and Walton 2008). For us, the centre is not the State and its policies as such but its citizens, in this case its affected citizens, that is, the displaced and their multiple voices, experiences and relationships with the State and its policies in this glocal war-cum-displacement cycle(s).

It is beyond the scope of this article to delve into the increasing problematisation of and contestation over terminologies involved, such as ‘internally displaced’, ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’, whether in academic or public debates the world over, which are understood to fall short in capturing complex realities (e.g. mixed migration or migration-displacement) and/or face being hijacked by politico-ideological projects of ordering.⁹ We therefore follow the approach of a ‘deliberately broad analytical lens’ which defines displacement and anticipatory movement as well as relocation as non-mutually exclusive categories conceptualising conflict-induced flight/‘crisis migration’ – ‘a descriptive term for all those who move, including those who require relocation in the context of humanitarian crises’; that is, being forced to relocate due to unfolding events, anticipated threats to one’s safety or due to being directly or indirectly affected, such as by collapsing basic services or loss of employment possibilities due to conflict or palpable threats thereof to one’s livelihood (Martin, Weerasinghe, and Taylor 2014, 5).

Following the 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and its Article 2, as endorsed by the United Nations’ General Assembly during its 2005 World Summit, IDPs are ‘persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border’ (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs OCHA 2004, 1; see also Cohen 2014).¹⁰ This definition is not devoid of problems, for example, given its state-centric approach in the light of transnational conflict configurations, longstanding local trans-border communities, unmarked border geographies and the everyday mobility of traders, labourers, nomadic and pastoralist communities or simply schoolchildren, thus leading to habitual ‘transgressions’ in spaces such as FATA, occurring at contested borders such as the Durand Line. The UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Pakistan estimated that around 105,000 IDPs have moved either into Khost or Paktika (Afghanistan) to safety or re-entered Pakistan via Kurram Agency (see OCHA 2014, 2014a und, 2014b). IDPs interviewed have repeatedly reported that their direct path to refuge was blocked due to curfews, violent skirmishes, ongoing military operations, lack of affordable means of transport as well as past habitual travel practices. This is especially true in the case of those who initially stayed behind to take care of property

when others left, believing that the operation would be short-lived, a mere couple of days. Ultimately, they had to leave due to the heavy bombardment of the area and negotiate their way to safety. A typical example is the case of a 50-year-old government employee from Miran Shah, interviewed in early 2016 in Peshawar, who had to travel via Khost (Afghanistan), mostly walking, and could only get to Bannu after the route was reopened. A 40-year-old government schoolteacher from Palangzai in North Waziristan, displaced in Peshawar with his family when interviewed in early 2016, encountered fierce bombardments on the exit road when deciding to leave. Without maps or navigation tools they had to wander through the border area in search of a safe passage towards Bannu, unaware of whether or not they crossed the Durand Line.

We were going, so we had to change our route and started going in Afghanistan's direction. We had no vehicles, so our feet were the only support we had for movement. We took three days and nights to reach an area called (...), near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border areas while having nothing with us – nothing to eat, drink and no clothes to change. Everything left behind at home. We took another three days to get back to Bannu, again by foot (...).

A further illustration is the case of a 29-year-old student from the University of Peshawar, interviewed in the city in early 2016. He originates from Razmak in North Waziristan, with his family displaced to Bannu. Deciding to return when Zarb-e-Azb was announced, to help his family leave, he was held up at a military entry point. Subsequently, he had to enter Afghanistan, stay one night in Khost in order to be able to re-enter Pakistan, using camels and trucks on his way home, negotiating 'zig-zag roads', slow travel, taking cover from ongoing fighting when in Afghanistan and bringing his family back the same way, albeit at exorbitantly increased transport costs.

They started launching rockets so we jumped from the truck and started crawling on the road to the trees. It was the most fearful time of my life. We were hiding there for a long time and then resumed our journey when the firing cooled down. My family went through a lot of troubles when they were leaving the region; all the surrounding areas were sealed. The Miran Shah and Mir Ali routes were completely closed, so we only had the direction of Khost and Afghanistan and that was our only link with the rest of the world.

The same is true for what counts as facts and figures, which are either difficult to aggregate or to gain access to, relying more often than not on estimates and/or data provided by one of the parties in the conflict. In addition, international stakeholders, experts and watchdog organisations usually assume a quantitative underrepresentation of the actual phenomenon, given registration processes, access criteria and the resultant challenges.¹¹ Classifying what counts or who is counted is a way of ordering/controlling in a highly politicised conflict-displacement situation if one

wishes to obfuscate the scale as well as dimensions of the humanitarian emergency at hand, by deflating or inflating numbers to manage (inter-) national responses, by refusing registration to certain groups of people to maintain a specific normative regime (e.g. female-headed households) or to block access to media and humanitarian organisations to generate a specific narrative of securitisation and ‘contagion’ for the projection of ‘surgically concise’ operations. Military operations in Pakistan (and not only there) remain literal black boxes for the wider public, secured by hegemonic narratives of securitisation and sacrifice and controlled media templates, which then impact on governance practices such as counter-terrorism strategies.¹²

Claiming there are no IDPs, only persons who will soon go home, the government created a Temporary Dislocated Persons (TDP) Support and Management Secretariat in July 2014. Headed by a general, tasked with overseeing response to North Waziristan’s IDPs and bypassing civilian disaster management entities, it has further increased military control of relief, which is being used as a counter-insurgency tool. (International Crisis Group 2015, 22)

Since 2008 a total of 13.7 million Pakistanis have been displaced due to disasters and another five million due to political violence, mostly confined to the spaces of FATA and KPk, while the country has for years ranked in the world’s top 10 countries with internal displacement. Some IDPs are trapped in protracted displacement: since 2005 in Balochistan and 2007 in KPk and FATA. For the years 2014–2015 up to 1.5 million conflict-induced IDPs alone were counted in KPk and FATA, while the country has displayed overall high levels of conflict-induced displacement linked to the glocal ‘Wars on Terror’ since 2004 (with a peak of three million in 2009). However, all these figures are considered to be underestimates for a number of reasons. First, states – and thus potential conflict parties with vested interests in ‘ordering’ – along with outdated census data or incomplete field data from local authorities/organisations are primarily responsible for statistics. Secondly, unregistered IDPs are excluded (e.g. those in urban displacement such as in Karachi or those fearing official registration points/camps due to threats from militants). Third, no regular monitoring of displacement over an extended period of time (e.g. in Balochistan) exists. Fourth, only those are counted who have fled from areas classified by the authorities as ‘calamity-hit’ (i.e. up to half of IDPs in KPk and FATA might not have been included), and, fifth, many women are not counted given a lack of identity documents and *purdah* (seclusion) norms (OCHA 2016).¹³ Only those officially numbered through their computerised identity cards (issued by NADRA and authorised by local elders and FATA’s political administration) are able to access benefits. But even then not all were acknowledged – or could pay to be, given a mushrooming ‘shadow industry (...), providing IDPs with registration slips and identification documents under-the-table and at a premium’ (Shuja and

Wazir 2016). Those left out were, among others, those having more than one address or inaccurate family trees, living with someone registered (even if as a married adult) or lacking necessary documentation. Two months into displacement the rejection rate for registration stood at 42.9%. Moreover, faulty records and capacity limitations for verification processes by the authorities concerned meant that ‘nearly half of all IDP heads of household were undocumented’ (Shuja and Wazir 2016). A further aggravating factor is that IDP populations are counted in household units, assuming a specific average family size – in 2014 counted as 5.2 members and in 2015 as 6.2 members due to new information provided to IDMC, raising the estimate by 200,000 persons (with the same census, government statistics and field data sets provided!) (see Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2016; ‘Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2015, 2015a).

All of these calculations do not factor in the constant mobility and fluid dynamics of displacement in the decades-long ‘Wars on Terror’. A significant number of IDP households remain in *cyclic* displacement-cum-migration (moving back and forth or on to other locations, depending the intensity of the conflict and resources available). Others face *split* (protracted) displacement, i.e. with some (mostly male) family members commuting back to protect assets in FATA while ensuring the safety and well-being of their displaced relatives, as our interview findings demonstrate.

Of Checkpoints, Curfews and the Quest for Respect

Let us return to Rancière’s idea of inscribing oneself into a symbolic order. Over the past years, those displaced have attempted to appropriate public spaces to protest for their rights-based claims to access basic services and facilities, not to be curtailed in their movements due to camp-based restrictions or military-imposed curfews upon return, to live secure lives or to receive adequate financial support and compensation for damages suffered. And most of all, not to be subjected to ‘the colonial-era Frontier Crimes Regulation’ as part of a return ‘agreement’ (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2016, 12; Farooq 2013). Linked to the militarisation of counter-terrorism operations and related relief efforts, entire communities are treated with suspicion, as a kind of rights-devoid contagion to be controlled and contained. ‘The prioritisation of security was evident in the bans and controls set in place against the IDPs. It was evident when, (...), preferring to hand over significant aspects of administration to the security forces. And, it is evident in the lengthy clearance processes for humanitarian organisations seeking to work with displaced families’ (Shuja and Wazir 2016).

En route to safety as well as upon arrival, multiple ‘borders’ needed to be crossed; body-borders were demarcated by a series of checkpoints and military-controlled registration points. These registration points were ‘called

by [the] military “strangulation points”, where one had to establish one’s identity (or not) through ID cards, names were noted down as well as livestock carried along, the few belongings carried along were checked or those deemed suspicious were detained (Shuja and Wazir 2016). ‘They would look through our belongings and then throw them on the ground. They did this with everybody’s personal items. They would throw things around and then command us to pick our stuff up’, complains one woman IDP from North Waziristan (Shuja and Wazir 2016), her recollections seconded by many we interviewed.

Testimonies of this series of procedures consist of experiences of humiliation, exhaustion and pain owing to long waiting lines without any provisions such as water, food or shelter in the summer heat, in particular for vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly. In addition, IDPs frequently reported an abusive demeanour among security forces, resulting in disenchantment with state forces, outright trauma, injury and even deaths. ‘At one point in time, I used to lose consciousness; and many times I found myself in hospital without knowing what had happened to me and how it happened’, explains a 23-year-old married male student, interviewed in 2016 at Peshawar University. The trauma caused by the loss of his home and belongings, the humiliation and disrespect experienced through being controlled and checked to the last item carried, through witnessing public beatings or persons being killed in public by security forces when queuing for rations or negotiating camp life left him, and many interviewed, with a feeling of powerlessness and of not belonging in this ‘traumatic time’ of a perceived new Great Game being played out in FATA. ‘If someone demolishes your markets, destroys your houses and kicks you out of your area, what could be worse than that? (...) We can’t say anything or raise our voice against it, because we get killed then. (...) In Waziristan, only innocent people are dying’, he concludes, pointing towards the high levels of psychosomatic stress suffered.

The securitised notion of a ‘cordon’ was also enforced via polio vaccinations on those having to cross. One could argue that this is a benevolent compulsion to contain a contagion in a world-wide fight to eradicate this disease. Yet from a displaced individual’s perspective, as pointed out in the majority of interviews conducted, the glocal ‘Wars on Terror’ include powerful tales-cum-conspiracy theories enforced by militants, elders and religious clergy that such vaccination drives are a way of tearing the community’s social fabric apart. ‘We oppose polio [vaccination]. They [non-Muslims] have mixed something in it, which will destroy our children’s morality. (...) I don’t want to talk about polio. We don’t want it’, vehemently argued a 55-year-old male IDP who had previously worked abroad and is now displaced to Peshawar, expressing a representative opinion pattern. Given the propaganda by the Taliban that it represents an un-Islamic, harmful drive to

control the community's virility and morality as well as the events surrounding the capture of Osama Bin Laden (whose hideout was ultimately identified in a setup vaccination drive), it is considered as an expression of Westoxification, another violent and disrespectful intervention into people's lives and bodies.

Regardless of the surveillance cartography conducted while people were under duress at registration points, it nevertheless allowed some to be able to access state services, to acquire much needed identification documents to be acknowledged as a citizen, becoming part of a formalised state–society contract. However, many IDPs felt that this included too high a sacrifice, with too little public support and solidarity and too great a dark shadow of surveillance and repression hovering above. Or, in the words of one IDP interviewed, of having to pay 'dearly' for the privilege of being 'made a citizen'. Overshadowed by the prism of securitisation and collective responsibility for citizens mapped, this codified relationship took shape in the form of aid distribution cards, later special *Watan* cards and National Identity Cards (NICs) needed to access much needed state support as well as to be able to return. 'We carry these identity cards around us as if they were passports. And this *Watan* card is our visa to return back to the homes we were driven out of', Shuja and Wazir (2016) explains one IDP living in an informal settlement in Bannu, nevertheless deprived of services and infrastructure benefits in everyday life. Moreover, reports surfaced that those returning had to sign an agreement that assigns the task of post-Zarb-e-Azb security to local communities – without providing necessary equipment and training to do so, 'outsourcing' security responsibility and once again withdrawing the state from key responsibilities. At the same time communities are subjected to tight curfews and mobility restrictions, which once again cut many off from the benefits of state services needed to rebuild livelihoods, such as seeking medical care, school education or simple protection from insecurity in the ongoing 'Wars on Terror'.

Seeing beyond the Veil – Gendered Experiences of Displacement, Invisibility and Mobility¹⁴

As of 2015, women with children in their care represented 75% of IDPs, heading 10–13% of IDP households (International Crisis Group 2015, 21).¹⁵ Apart from this, women have been one of the main targets of the conflict – a conflict with a distinct gender dimension of this politico-ideological contestation with the State and its normative order, embedded within a wider geopolitical contestation and gender-based violence as part of the conflict configuration. 'Militants would threaten us from the mosque speakers, [or] from speakers on their cars when they drove through the village. They would tell us to not leave our houses without a veil, or there would be

consequences', explains 70-year-old Gul Badan, displaced from Khyber Agency (N.N. 2013).

Human rights violations and gender-based violence were either direct outcomes of violence, such as the assassination of health worker Suriya Bibi and women's activist Farida Afridi, or attacks/threats against teachers, nurses and policewomen. Indirect consequences due to the militarisation and insecurity created by the conflict and subsequent displacement have led to under-age marriages, trafficking of women, loss of employment opportunities and mobility in public spaces or loss of access to health care and education (International Crisis Group 2015, 20–21).

Female students suffered more as compared to males as they [men] can go anywhere. Our students were left with incomplete courses when the military operation started, while [women] IDPs faced great difficulties; because of diseases the miscarriage rate increases, deaths of children occurring while moving to safe areas. (female lecturer from North Waziristan, redeployed to Parachinar due to Zarb-e-Azb, interviewed in late 2015)

A female schoolteacher from a village in Lower Kurram, interviewed in late 2015 in Parachinar, spoke of her fear due to the intensity of the conflict, 'of sending our children outside. People in our village, especially women, faced a lot of problems. There was a shortage of food items. It was difficult to go outside the home, such as working in the fields, fetching water. We were imprisoned in our homes'.

Khwendo Kor [Sisters' Home], headed by Maryam Bibi, renowned women's activist from South Waziristan, is one of the few civil society organisations working across FATA and KPk for over two decades, mobilising women for the FATA reform process, providing basic services and working on women's rights for those in displacement or not. In one of its reports already published in 2011 (thus prior to Zarb-e-Azb), the organisation documented 'accounts by displaced women from FATA of sexual and other physical violence by militants and security officials. Armed conflict has contributed to men abusing or murdering women relatives with impunity' (International Crisis Group 2015, 20–21; see also interview with the head of Khwendo Khor, Maryam Bibi, N.N. 2012).

Gender-specific vulnerabilities substantially increase when in displacement, such as risks of trafficking and sexual exploitation, apart from obstacles to access to relief goods and services such as food rations and health care (International Crisis Group 2015, 21). Women were disadvantaged either when not in possession of a national identity card necessary for registering with the government and aid organisations or when not accompanied by a male relative, for instance, when widowed or as a female relative of one of the many working migrants to the United Arab Emirates. Women might not have been aware of the importance of ID cards, having been prevented by

militants or male relative members from procuring them. There were no gender-segregated registration points and even women with identity cards faced difficulties. These difficulties range from attempting to access relief goods while not being allowed to queue alongside men at ration distribution points etc., to accessing washrooms/toilets constructed adjacent to men's ones in a culturally-insensitive and thus exclusionary manner or accessing health care given the lack of female nurses and doctors as well as female security forces. Supported by political parties, in-camp held *jirgas* (tribal councils/consensus-based assemblies) decided to disallow and thus bar women from direct access to relief goods, regardless if from a female- or child-headed household or part of a family. There are also reports of women being threatened by officials when attempting to access relief or file complaints (Glatz 2015; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan 2016; Human Rights Commission 2015).¹⁶

On their way to safe passage, women encountered many a traumatic experience: living and travelling under constant fear of a militant ambush or when fighting was ongoing, leaving homes empty-handed and with open doors, running bare-footed and without *chador* (large veiling cloth wrapped around the head and upper part of the body). Or when no transport was available, when having no food, milk or water to provide for children or when having to give birth by the roadside. Many interviewed described that being displaced meant being without access to basic necessities in unfamiliar, disturbing and highly restrictive circumstances such as in military-controlled camps or in an unchartered urban setting and infrastructure outside one's habitual social network.¹⁷ Typical for many experiences narrated by female IDPs from Kurram and South Waziristan interviewed in late 2015 and early 2016 is the following quote from a 60-year-old woman, displaced repeatedly, the last time in 2007 to Parachinar.

For the third time we left our homes completely. There was firing of tracers and mortar shells while we were barefoot. Our feet were injured with thorns while running. When I looked behind, it seemed to me as [if] all stars are falling from the sky. (...) The scenes from that night keep playing in my mind. (...) Unlike the first time, we were not welcomed this time. (...), my brother told me 'It is better to leave, because we cannot bear pictures of our women in militants' cell phones'. (...) Most of the village was empty. My brother told me to go empty-handed. It was difficult to leave everything for a third time, so I looked around in the room and hid an iron under my *dupatta* [large scarf/shawl]. I gave it to my relative after reaching Alizai. I was worried about my brother. Our large family was separated from one another. We left our beautiful homes unlocked. I can bear everything, but my brother's death is unbearable [crying]. We faced a lot of problems [crying]. (...) When we came here, we stayed in the *Imam Bargah* of Parachinar for some time. People provided us food, burqas and *dupattas*. Then we entered empty homes which were left by people. We entered empty homes and we had nothing to eat.

Out of the interviews conducted with women IDPs emerge various narratives of suffering, trauma, insecurity and deprivation. These encompass tales of walking bare-footed, without proper *chador* and losing one's children when running to save one's life or of dealing with mental disturbances of children and relatives. How to negotiate conflict-induced insecurities while providing care featured prominently in women's narrations – either as direct experiences or indirectly when helping other IDP women upon their arrival. Such accounts are also replicated by many of the men displaced, concerned with the specific hardships for female relatives. Pashto poetry has always served as poetry of resistance, also in displacement, such as in the words of Muhammad Salem, displaced to Bannu: 'Look at what has happened, o Khattak, our women are bareheaded and barefoot, forced out of their homes; see what has become of us' (Kohari 2014, 40).

More often than not it is an accumulation of stressful incidents and challenges to negotiate while lacking access to adequate support and resources, as in the case of one woman interviewed in late 2015. While being displaced in 2007 to Parachinar, her daughter and sister were injured. After reaching Parachinar and setting up life there, she lost her husband and nephew in a bomb blast, while her son was also seriously injured. Having to negotiate the hardships of displacement as a widow, she struggles to provide care, not only for her traumatised sister-in-law, but also without sufficient familial and government support, as she explained in the following interview quote.

I had a good life before. After [my] husband's death, I face many problems. It's very difficult to provide food, education and other facilities to my children. My son was in bed for one year. We had to take him monthly to Peshawar for treatment. (...) Even our family did not support us in times of difficulty.

Displacement also tears the social fabric of the community and more often than not shrinks protected spaces of interaction, such as the space and time for women to discuss their problems when habitually fetching water during the evenings. The shrinking of spaces for interaction, for example, in camp-based or urban displacement, thus leads to further isolation of women. In villages they could participate in the economic activities of their family, particularly in growing crops, vegetables on the family landholdings, apart from looking after the livestock, the production of milk, butter, ghee and cheese. These rural spaces are also in stark contrast to towns and cities, the urban displacement, and when the separation from one's extended family support system presents additional challenges to tackle in situations where basic service provisions and infrastructure are lacking.

It's better to have relatives in other villages, so that they can help you in times of need. My sister provided us blankets, pillows and other utensils. The house in which we were living was in a deserted area, I was afraid of insects. (...) There were

scorpions, centipedes and other insects in the home. After some time I bought a hen which produced chicks, and after a few months, we had a lot of hens. So these centipedes were eaten by the chicken and we relaxed. There was a large uncultivated piece of land at this house. I asked my sister to give me seeds of red beans and other vegetables. So I spent most of my time in cultivating vegetables and beans. In front of our home, there was an empty house, which was destroyed, so water from different places like the hospital's waste water, the city's *nullah* [here: open sewer] and rain water collected in the basement of the house. We used this water for the laundry, bathing and keeping personal hygiene. For drinking, we fetched water from faraway places, while for other purposes we used water from the basement. (...) For three years we used that water.

They had to negotiate strict normative regimes and gendered restrictions on mobility and access to resources as highlighted above. Such restrictions are not only due to situations of displacement but also arise in the course of a rising insurgency able to control areas of FATA and to impose gender-restrictive, misogynist interpretations. Implications are the destruction of schools for girls; acid attacks on female students; threats or active bans against women engaging in agricultural activities, employment in government and private institutions such as schools, hospitals, vocational training centres or travelling for private or professional reasons. One violent attack can send shock waves and signals through the community, as was the case of the health worker Suriya Bibi from Parachinar, mentioned to us during the course of interviews without daring to disclose details such as her name. The attack led to large-scale disenfranchisement of women from public spaces and salaried work, and from seeking medical care in other cities. As outlined by academic and activist Noreen Naseer after conversations held in 2013 in Parachinar, many women health workers and teachers resigned or went on indefinite leave after Suriya Bibi 'was ambushed on her way back to Peshawar in an ambulance, [when] she was raped and brutally killed by [the] Taliban. This was not reported in newspapers [...] nor [was] any security provided by [the] local administration to female staff working in health services' (Naseer 2015, 134).

Veiling is also affected (and thus mobility, among other things) – changing from *chadors* being used in villages to burqas when in displacement, as highlighted by a schoolteacher from Lower Kurram, living as IDP since 2007, interviewed in late 2015. 'We had a good life before. Women were free to go outside for their work and jobs. Our children were playing in the fields. In Parachinar, we are limited to our homes while in the village we had a free life. The *purdah* system is strict here'. Despite the observance of *purdah*, she feels that this is in vain, having being displaced in the first place: 'Women are the honour of men in our society. We lost our honour after leaving our homes'. While this is an outlier opinion documented, many men were distressed about concerns over women's *purdah*, thus privacy, in public spaces and on the move – be it in camps, on the roadside, in houses rented, at registration or aid delivery points. Such violations of gender

seclusion were repeatedly recorded in the interviews with male IDPs, which impacts negatively on practices regarded as integral to their specific socio-cultural identity. One negative outcome was not only the isolation of many women once in displacement – except for those girls able to access educational institutions – but also their being barred from accessing basic services and aid delivery while in (most frequently urban) displacement. Displacement could also have been a potential opportunity to link women with governance processes and networks, thus positively impacting on women's well-being as well as state-society relations in an otherwise highly constrained, violent and exclusionary setting of practices back at home.

Any Larger Lessons from 'Smaller' Worlds?

What emerges from the stories shared by those displaced is a perception of 'being between the devil and the deep blue sea', of being caught in the global 'Wars on Terror', of being orchestrated in a disempowering and dehumanising way in a revamped conflict configuration of a neo-colonial 'Great Game' which demands an exceedingly high cost of protracted sacrifice from local communities while at the same time silencing them and rendering them invisible.

Another narrative crystallising out of the many testimonies shared are experiences of othering, control and vilification, aided by the highly militarised context in which displacement as well as relief-cum-rehabilitation takes place. This taps into existing colonial legacies of the label of 'tribal communities', leading to de-solidarisation and contagion-based public responses and hence the further securitisation of intervention approaches and the invisibility of local communities' resilience and resistance towards militancy, political violence and displacement. This is linked to the narrative of 'only God is with us rather than anyone in Pakistan' – one of experiencing disrespect, humiliation and sacrifice as citizens of a State in conflict. Of a State that extends its citizenship rights and basic services in asymmetrical ways, if not imposing border regimes and body-borders at its centre as well as its periphery.

While displaced communities have displayed high levels of resilience in rebuilding livelihoods, in resisting political violence and radicalisation, this toll has a negative impact on building the sustainable and constructive state-society relations needed to overcome the conflict in the long term and to allow for healing and dismantling the many borders imposed, which are more than militarised gateways and obstacles to belonging as well as to post-conflict governance.

We can only reiterate that our explorations here are explorations – tentative and incomplete when juxtaposing displaced and their experiences and narratives thereof at the centre of our analysis without dismantling the

prevailing hegemonic discourses or replacing the taken for granted terminologies and concepts with alternative ones. But turning the spotlight, allowing for visibility of those largely rendered invisible and pointing towards a number of problems of key terminologies used are for us small but nevertheless important submissions to a very much required debate about alternative conceptual frameworks and empirical data informing academic work on international relations and glocal conflicts.

The last words belong to Fazle Basir, the elderly poet from Khyber Agency, whose last wish is to publish his own poems. At least this one will be seen:

I live the days and nights in this world. Some in glee, some in gloom.

I'm left alone amid the lashings of anguish. And I had to endure them all alone.

Some in glee, some in gloom.

These are the kinds of days I live in this world. If someone thinks I feint; I swear this is how I live.

These are the kind of days I live in this world. Some in glee, some in gloom.

Don't say it all Basir, cease here. I'll tell you these tales some other day.

These are the kind of days I live in this world.

Such are the days I pass in this world.¹⁸

Notes

1. Interview conducted in late 2015 with 60-year-old woman, living since 2007 in displacement in Parachinar, Kurram Agency.
2. This represents the case of a large-scale military operation, for example, Zarb-e-Azb, and often repeated / cyclic large-scale displacements of a predominantly Sunni population from FATA, mainly driven by state-imposed, military-controlled mobility corridors to adjacent parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
3. This represents the case of a protracted context of political violence-cum-ideological-economic conflict and repeated to protracted displacement of a predominantly Shia minority population. Given discussions with interview partners from Kurram Agency, Rahat Batool argues that many see the conflict in this agency as one driven by geopolitical and ideological, as well as economic interests of insurgents given the strategic location and trans-border illicit trade routes of Kurram.
4. Accessed December 5, 2018. <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/about>.
5. This data was provided by Ehsan Mehmood Khan (2014, 38) in the glossy magazine *Pique* in what appears to be one of the many contracted articles in favour of the military operation and its approach, given the tenor of the photos displayed, demonstrating the military as protector, as well as the data provided, objectifying IDPs as a 'contagion' to be taken care of, to ensure the safe crossing of 'body-borders'. Among the assistance details outlined, vaccination ranks prominently: 'polio vaccinations of 221,000 IDPs' along with details about cattle and poultry vaccinated. Such record taking also featured in the regular OCHA updates on Zarb-e-Azb.

6. Transcription of video interview of M. Ahmad with M. N. Rehman, IDP from North Waziristan, now living in Bannu, as interviewed in July 2014. Accessed December 5, 2018. <http://www.tanqeed.org/2014/07/they-are-not-friends-to-the-pashtuns-voices-from-north-waziristan/>.
7. Transcription of video interview of M. Ahmad with Nur Gul, IDP from North Waziristan, as interviewed on 24.06.2014. Accessed December 5, 2018. <http://www.tanqeed.org/2014/07/i-am-from-waziristan-and-i-am-not-afraid-of-anyone-voices-from-north-waziristan/>.
8. Transcribed from the interview conducted with Fazle Basir in the UNHCR Pakistan video 'The Displaced Poet'. Accessed October 5, 2016. unhcrpk.org/gallery/videos.
9. For a debate on terminologies see the long-standing analyses and debates in *Forced Migration Review*, e.g. on the term 'crisis migration' (Fagen 2014; Martin, Weerasinghe, and Taylor 2014; McAdam 2014).
10. Pakistan has signed this document and is also bound by further international humanitarian law.
11. For example, UNHCR and OCHA figures only refer to IDPs registered by the government, which by no means capture the whole scale of the displacement and which is problematised by the IDMC.
12. An example is the case of Cyril Almeida, journalist with Pakistan's leading English-language daily DAWN, who has been barred from leaving the country after writing critically about the Pakistani security agencies' dealing with militant outfits (Boone 2016).
13. At the time of writing, OCHA provided the following data on registered IDPs from FATA: since March 2015 188,963 families returned home (76,190 in 2016 alone) while 114,828 families remain in protracted displacement, amounting to a return ratio of 62% (17% of these returning households were female-headed). Those returnees continue to face a situation in which 72% of houses are fully damaged, thus shelter remains a huge problem in the upcoming winter months. The return ratio varies within FATA, ranging from the lowest with 42% in Orakzai to 88% in Khyber. The situation in the Waziristan agencies is one of continuously high protracted displacement: 44% of IDP families (out of which 7% female-headed) in the North and 54% (out of which 22% female-headed) in the South, equal to 84,521 registered IDP families (out of a total of 114,828) remain displaced from FATA due to military operations (OCHA 2016).
14. In this section, we rely on interviews conducted by Rahat Batool (2016) during her MPhil thesis research on *Women's Everyday Life Experiences of Militancy in FATA: A Case Study of Kurram Agency*, whose transcripts were made available to us. All subsequent steps of interpretation, evaluation and judgement are solely ours, the authors of this article. We would like to thank Rahat Batool for her support by granting us access to the interview data.
15. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the number of women IDPs is underrepresented due to a lack of identity documents, estimating that women represent 23% out of the total IDP population and children 54% (Glatz 2015, 3, 7). In the infographic of the Jinnah Institute disaggregated data for IDPs from North Waziristan / Zarb-e-Azb alone are provided, which slightly differ from the aggregated data from IDMC: 5% of households are headed by women, 0.6% by children while women represent 48.79% of IDPs (Jinnah Institute 2016).
16. In a report by UNHCR's former community development officer in Peshawar during the 2008/9 FATA displacements, Khadka (2010) outlines as one of the challenges for participatory camp management the restrictions faced by displaced women, be it in terms of ensuring the observance of *purdah* combined with related mobility restrictions in the access to washrooms, be it in terms of interacting with female staff members without

permission, be it in terms of women participating in gender-segregated committees formed to deal with issues such as water, education, food or security/protection while aiming to ensure inclusive representation of the whole IDP community.

17. As experienced during the course of the interviews conducted, many women faced multiple displacements and were not used to being given voice to share their worries and feelings or to narrating in a chronological way. A number of them preferred to sit in groups and share their experiences, often with strong emotions displayed, having rather learnt to silence themselves, augmented by the lack of psychosocial care and constrained, secluded living conditions in displacement.
18. Transcribed from the English subtitles of the poem recited in Pashto by Fazle Basir in the UNHCR Pakistan video 'The Displaced Poet'. Accessed October 5, 2016. unhcrpk.org/gallery/videos.

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